DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 032 049 JC 690 309

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A Junior College Reading Program in Action.
Pub Date [69]
Note-9p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
Descriptors-*Junior Colleges, *Reading Development, *Remedial Reading
Identifiers-Oregon

As the junior college accepts students whose ability ranges from grade 7 to 12, its reading program must be geared accordingly. The college reading center is for students who want to comprehend more in less time, quickly improve study habits, increase vocabulary, or improve their spelling. The program is valid insofar as it meets these needs. Reading comprehension, the most frequent lack, is only part of the complex reading act. The instructor, after finding each student's reading level, can arrange flexible groupings, ranging from whole-class discussion to individual instruction. Starting each student at his own level allows him initial success and builds his self-esteem. He must learn to set himself a goal for each assignment and to become a flexible reader by adjusting his speed to the complexity of his material (e.g., a novel compared with a math paper). He will soon realize that his reading rate (and comprehension) depends on a combination of his basic skill, background, experience, intelligence, and the material's purpose and organization. The writer suggests a method of systematic vocabulary improvement. He also describes a directed reading lesson, which leads through recognition of purpose, arousal of interest, and silent reading for comprehension to oral questioning and rereading. This lesson should be applied to similar situations for transfer and reinforcement. The student must be encouraged to read independently for study or pleasure, as well as in the reading room. (HH)

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ED032049

A JUNIOR COLLEGE READING PROGRAM IN ACTION

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Most freshmen entering junior college are senior high school graduates whose academic ability levels range anywhere from grade seven to grade twelve. These facts speak for themselves. For a junior college reading program to be effective means that one must be prepared to meet the wide range of the students' reading and learning abilities. The way in which and the means by which this condition is met will ultimately determine the course of the reading actions to be taken within the quarter or semester period.

Junior college freshmen who choose to come to the college reading center usually want to comprehend more in less time, to find quickly ways and means to improve study habits, to increase scanty vocabulary repertoires, and to become "better spellers." Whatever is stated, outlined, and prescribed in any reading program is valid only to the extent to which the content serves the needs and purposes of the students who have chosen the reading course to improve themselves, whatever their reasons may be.

Among the different learning tasks stated earlier, one appears to be more ardently, more wishfully, and yet more fearfully anticipated than all other learning requirements. When a student says "How can I comprehend more?" or "I wish I could understand what I have to read," or "Make me read better!" no sincere-minded reading teacher can fail to get the student's message: he wishes to comprehend reading material more easily. For some students the road to comprehension is rugged and steep; but almost always a goal within their own capacities is reachable. Other students require assistance and guidance in varying degrees in order to accomplish temporary goals in their reading efforts toward comprehension. If reading is reasoning and thinking, then comprehension

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is the nucleus around which all other reading competencies circulate.

In the functional undertaking of teaching reading comprehension, reading aspects, skills, attitudes, and personal development are steadily interacting in a closely knit interrelationship denoting the "highly complex, purposeful thinking process engaged in by the entire organism while acquiring knowledge, evolving new ideas, solving problems, or relaxing and recuperating through the interpretation of printer symbols" (7).

The total complexity of the reading act contributing to comprehension must be clearly recognized in order to perceive each detail, not as a separate entity in itself but as a contributing part of the whole.

Any reading aspect to be taught must, of course, depend entirely upon the need of the student who is engaged in the reading task. The first necessary step then in attempting to improve comprehension is to begin instruction at the student's instructional reading level.

Instructional Reading Levels

To determine the student's instructional reading level at which he can read and learn content materials, the writer administers the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, a group informal reading test; and for those students scoring below the 25th percentile on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and/or scoring 50 percent or lower on the group informal reading test, an informal reading inventory is used. In addition, it is necessary to be cognizant of the reading range within the group. This reinforces multilevel instruction as well as multilevel book approach. The former calls for flexible grouping which may encompass the class as a whole group when a new topic is introduced, demonstrated, and discussed. Smaller groups are formed, dissolved, with new ones formed again in accordance with and depending upon the needs and purposes arising from the goals to be pursued and the tasks to be accomplished. Individual instruction takes place when a student encounters difficulties not encountered by other students.

Starting instruction for comprehension at the student's instructional level means to meet the student on a level where he can perform the task successfully which, in turn, assists in fulfilling belonging and esteem needs and makes him ready to attack new and more complex and difficult tasks.

Teleological Determination

To perform a task successfully implies that the task must not only lie within the student's functional ability but also must be directed toward a reachable goal. The student's teleological determination or the ability to set a goal or purpose is one of the main ingredients for effective, mature, and independent reading. Recognizing this necessity, the writer teaches "setting purposes before reading" in a systematic fashion showing the "how" and the "why" to the students.

How can a student learn to set a purpose? One might write a chapter heading or any subheading on the chalkboard and ask the students to put it in the form of a question. Students first work examples given by the instructor and then use titles taken directly from their required textbook reading. This is meaningful learning that transfers readily to daily reading tasks. The answer to "why" one sets purposes is illustrated by having students answer the formed question. Every question requires an answer. To find this answer, the student must read to understand; i.e., to work toward fulfillment of the set purpose. When the student has learned to set purposes, the "why" acts as a psychological drive to fulfill the need to problem-solve and the reading task is no longer done for the sake of assignment or the teacher's fancy.

The Flexible Reader

After the "how" and the "why" of setting a purpose or purposes are accomplished, the student learns to adjust reading rates to different types of reading materials. Reading selections from history, geography, mathematics, chemistry, and geology are first read for comprehension. It is clear that rate and

comprehension vary with the difficulty of the materials as well as with the purpose of the readers. Inductive reasoning will lead the students to realize that the reading of materials in science and mathematics necessitates a slower reading rate in order to gain greatest possible comprehension. Most important, however, is the fact that students must, out of their experiences, arrive at the conclusion that there is not one single, all-governing reading rate. They must begin to realize that reading rate is governed by proficiency in basic reading skills, background experiences, intelligence, purpose, and the organization and difficulty of the reading material. The ability of a student to adjust to the reading materials makes him a flexible reader.

Vocabulary Improvement

Functioning competently as a flexible reader demands systematic enlargement in breadth and depth of the student's vocabulary repertoire. Vocabulary improvement is another basic requirement for optimum reading comprehension. Studies emphasize that without an understanding of words, comprehension is impossible. It follows that a large vocabulary is related to high comprehension. Comprehension then depends upon the extent and the richness of the reader's meaning vocabulary which comes from his background experiences. To be certain, vocabulary should not be taught in isolation but should always be related to meaningful content. Leary, in fact, postulates that in order for the reader to achieve greatest possible comprehension he must become meaning-conscious. This skill is taught by means of word structure analysis and context clues. The former depends upon word recognition of prefixes, suffixes, and root words and on studying word origin, synonyms, and antonyms as well as word combinations and compounds. The latter, context clues, is taught by means of inference, definitions, figures of speech, tone and mood, and comparisons and contrasts. One might instruct the student to use either cards or a notebook to write down

unknown words which occur frequently in his textbooks as well as those words and phrases which are used in lectures, conversations, and in additional study or recreational reading. To be able to make use of these selected words the student must pronounce the words and associate meaning with them. Words which cause difficulty are viewed again in the meaningful setting in which they had been located in the textbooks. Possible meanings are discussed and perhaps attached to the words, and, if necessary, definitions are rechecked in the dictionary. The next step is to make the newly learned words functional, i.e., have the words applied whenever possible in daily discussions, in oral utterances, and in written exercises or in other subject matter area assignments. The more the student uses these words and integrates them into his word repertoire, the more he builds up a thorough understanding of them. To broaden and deepen these vicarious experiences gathered by exploring new meanings, the student could be requested to write and follow a personal program of recreational readings which would assist him in strengthening his ability to read the lines, to read between the lines, and to read beyond the lines.

Instructional reading levels, teleological determination, flexible reading, and vocabulary development never stand in isolation within a reading activity but must function harmoniously toward the common goal of comprehension.

The Directed Reading Lesson

How can the goal of comprehension be reached in the most economical manner while focusing on the psychological well-being of the reading student? The directed reading lesson is the answer. A directed reading lesson is a planned, purposeful and systematic procedure whereby the student reads for differing degrees of comprehension. First, the reading instructor should demonstrate to the student the procedure of a directed reading lesson. After the student has overviewed the directed reading lesson, he works through each step in order to experience the impact of each activity on comprehending intelligently the reading

material under discussion. Progressive insight permits the student to conclude that all the activities inherent in each step must be thoroughly mastered before proceeding to the next succeeding step. Psychologically, it involves the student's attention and concentration as well as his planning and systematizing abilities. The directed reading lessons provide the student with a procedure which enables them to look deeper into and beyond the printed symbols.

After the student knows the objective or objectives for the lesson as a whole, the readiness period follows in which he must generate interest in the work at hand and motivate himself if he is not already interested in and motivated toward the tasks. Since interests are learned and vary with each individual, discussion with the learner may ignite a spark of curiosity which will act as a drive toward further investigation. During the readiness period, or assignment period required reading skills as well as content materials may be discussed in hope of filling in missing background experiences. In addition, new words could be pronounced, heard, or seen and their various meanings, clarified. At last, the student sets his own purpose, writes them down for his own reference, and then enters the second activity of the directed reading lesson, silent reading.

After reading materials have been assigned in accordance with the student's instructional reading level, silent reading for meaning begins. While the student is perusing silent reading material, the reading instructor is free to observe the student's reading habits. Head movement, lip movements, finger- or pencil-pointing as well as subtle distress or frustration signals, such as frowning and glancing around, may be noted for later discussions with the individual student.

The silent reading is followed by a question and discussion period. A

student's answers to vocabulary, fact, and inference questions reveal how effectively he has read for purpose as well as for differing degree of comprehension. Questions like What did he say? What did he mean? and What evaluation can you make? denote varying degrees of comprehension. Out of the question and discussion period and accompanying teacher-student interaction there develops oral and/or silent re-reading.

Oral or silent rereading requires new purposes of a more detailed nature. Rereading serves the purpose of regaining overlooked or not clearly perceived statements of the author. Rereading also allows for the meaningful practice of scanning to locate pertinent information as well as for meaningful oral reading of the located information. Critical thinking will enter into the process to weigh the pro's and con's. This process prepares the students to explore the last phase of the directed reading lesson, the special improvement period.

To make the special improvement period meaningful, one movement must initially take place: the previously formed instructional reading groups dissolve and new groups are formed to fulfill new purposes in accordance with the students' needs. Some students (research groups) will investigate pertinent and related subject matter; others (interest groups) will broaden and deepen common interests aroused by the subject area under consideration; still others (special needs groups) will ask to pursue special needs not shared by the rest of the class; and a few (tutorial groups) may be willing to help and assist some students in learning particular skills they are trying to learn.

In addition to these follow-up experiences, the meaningful explored activities contained in the successive steps of the directed reading lesson

must be applied to a maximum number of similar learning situations so that transfer occurs.

Fulfillment In Action

Each reading aspect, with its related activities, contributes its pertinent share toward comprehension and understanding of any reading material. Prerequisite to this achievement is the understanding that the junior college student must master the various reading aspects and their related activities not only theoretically or just practicably in the sheltered atmosphere of the reading room but also outside on his own as a mature and independent reader. At this point the student, within his own capacity, is reading for the highest possible comprehension, be it for study requirements or for recreation.

When these suggested reading activities actually take place within the confinements of the reading room, then and only then, the junior college reading program with all its ramifications is fulfilling one of its major services to junior college reading students.

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